

country, with a keen appreciation of actual conditions, almost entirely suspended silver coinage and received her circulation from the other countries of the union.¹ The presentation of gold for coinage at the French mints ceased during 1872 and 1873, and the silver coinage was 156,270,160 francs in the latter year. The mint of Belgium was besieged by the owners of silver bullion and 111,000,000 francs in five-franc pieces were coined in 1873, while even Italy, though on a paper basis, coined 42,000,000 lire, which were refused acceptance by the Bank of France.³

The limitation of the coinage was resorted to for the four years ending with 1877 as the only means of averting the single silver standard. Conferences were held annually and the maximum coinage of five-franc pieces was fixed for each country. The aggregate of these allowances for the four years was 45,200,000 francs for Belgium, 216,000,000 francs for France, 18,000,000 francs for Greece, 164,000,000 francs for Italy, and 28,800,000 francs for Switzerland. Italy was allowed to coin 29,000,000 francs in 1878 and 1879, on condition that the sum should be retained in the Bank of Italy as a metallic reserve against the circulating paper money. Silver continued to fall in price and the policy of limitation was succeeded in 1878 by the policy of absolute suspension of the coinage of five-franc pieces. The monetary union was renewed from 1878 to January 1, 1886, and was extended in 1885 to January 1, 1891, since when it has been prolonged annually by mutual agreement. The convention of 1885 not only bound each of the contracting parties not to resume the coinage of five-franc without the consent of the union, but provided that if such should be resumed the coins should be redeemable by the nation coining them in

gold on demand, and that if such

¹ Her entire coinage of five-franc pieces, from the first **limitation** to the final suspension of silver coinage, was only 7,.978».ooo (\$1,500,000).—Haupt, 85-86.

⁵ Arnaunc", 231.